

DETAILED ACTION

1. The following Office action is in response to communication filed on March 03, 2010. Independent claims 45 and 66 have been amended by examiner's amendment. Dependant claims 67-72 have been amended by examiner's amendment. Claims 1-44, 46-47, 49-50, 53-54, and 60-65 have been cancelled by examiner's amendment. **Claims 45, 48, 51-52, 55-59, and 66-72** are currently pending and have been allowed.

EXAMINER'S AMENDMENT

2. An examiner's amendment to the record appears below. Should the changes and/or additions be unacceptable to applicant, an amendment may be filed as provided by 37 CFR 1.312. To ensure consideration of such an amendment, it **MUST** be submitted no later than the payment of the issue fee.

Authorization for this examiner's amendment was given in a telephone conversation on June 8, 2010 by Tina Gonka (Limited Recognition No. L0623).

The application has been amended as follows:

Listing of the claims :

1.-44. (canceled)

45. (currently amended) A method for managing the supply for a plurality of service providers of service devices, the method comprising:

pooling data regarding a plurality of service devices in an inventory pool as device data records in a database, wherein the inventory pool comprises service provider inventories for service devices owned by each of the respective plurality of service providers and a device provider inventory for service devices owned by the device provider;

managing the service devices in the inventory pool by a data processing system comprising a computer in communication with the database accessible across a communication network by one or more client computers, wherein the data processing system is programmed to

(a) receive a request from a client computer of a requesting service provider for a requested service device;

(b) check the availability of the requested service device, via the computer on the data processing system, by searching the inventory pool in the database by:

(i) searching an inventory of the requesting service provider in the inventory pool and providing for loaning of the requested service device if located; otherwise,

(ii) searching the device provider inventory and providing for leasing the requested service device if located; otherwise,

(iii) searching the service provider inventories of other service providers in the inventory pool and leasing the requested service device if located.

wherein the service providers have a defined set of service personnel who can request service devices, and wherein in the data processing system is stored for each of the service personnel a respective personnel data record containing data uniquely characterizing the service personnel in terms of name and associated service provider,

wherein the personnel data record comprises one or more of criteria for the validity of a device request and a person with release authorization for the release of an invalid device request,

wherein, when a device request is made by service personnel the data processing system checks the validity of the device request regarding the personnel-related admissibility criteria, and wherein, if the device request is not valid, the data processing system requests a person with release authorization associated with the service personnel to initiate a release of the device request,

wherein the personnel-related admissibility criteria comprise a maximum permitted purchase price, and

wherein one or more of the service devices are assigned to service personnel in the data processing system, and wherein only the service devices assigned to said service personnel are offered by the data processing system in the form of a catalog for requests.

46. (canceled)

47. (canceled)

48. (previously presented) The method as claimed in claim 45, further comprising delivering the requested service device to a desired site of the requesting service provider by the device provider.

49. (canceled)

50. (canceled)

51. (previously presented) The method as claimed in claim 45, wherein the following further steps are executed by the data processing system:

if there is no availability in the inventory pool, providing for purchasing and delivering of the requested service device to the requesting service provider by the device provider.

52. (previously presented) The method as claimed in claim 45, wherein the service devices comprise tools, and/or measuring means, and/or testing means.

53. (canceled)

54. (canceled)

55. (previously presented) The method as claimed in claim 45, wherein each of the device data records contain data uniquely characterizing the respective service device in terms of device type, location and user.

56. (currently amended) The method as claimed in claim 55, wherein each of the the device data records further include one or more of device owner data, leasing costs data, and purchase price data.

57. (previously presented) The method as claimed in claim 55, wherein each of the device data records further include a date for a recall of the service device.

58. (previously presented) The method as claimed in claim 57, wherein the data processing system automatically compares a current date with the date for a recall of the service device, and wherein if the current date is after the recall date, a recall of the service device to the device service provider is initiated.

59. (previously presented) The method as claimed in claim 57, wherein the date for a recall of the service device is a date for a calibration of the service device.

60.-65. (canceled)

66. (currently amended) A system for managing the supply for a plurality of service providers of service devices, the system comprising:

a data processing system comprising a computer executable code, and a computer, accessible across a communication network by one or more client computers;

a database in communication with the data processing system, wherein the database comprises an inventory pool comprising device data records for service devices, wherein the inventory pool comprises service provider inventories for service devices owned by each of a respective plurality of service providers and a device provider inventory for service devices owned by a device provider;

wherein the data processing system is programmed to the computer executable code on the data processing system, when executed by the computer in the data processing system, performs the steps of:

(a) receiving a request from a client computer of a requesting service provider for a requested service device;

(b) checking the availability of the requested service device by searching the inventory pool in the database by:

(i) searching an inventory of the requesting service provider in the inventory pool and providing for loaning of the requested service device if located; otherwise,

(ii) searching the device provider inventory and providing for leasing the requested service device if located; otherwise,

(iii) searching the service provider inventories of other service providers in the inventory pool and leasing the requested service device if located[[.]],

wherein the service providers have a defined set of service personnel who can request service devices, and wherein in the data processing system is stored for each of the service personnel a respective personnel data record containing data uniquely characterizing the service personnel in terms of name and associated service provider,

wherein the personnel data record comprises one or more of criteria for the validity of a device request and a person with release authorization for the release of an invalid device request,

wherein, when a device request is made by service personnel the data processing system checks the validity of the device request regarding the personnel-related admissibility criteria, and wherein, if the device request is not valid, the data processing system requests a person with release authorization associated with the service personnel to initiate a release of the device request,

wherein the personnel-related admissibility criteria comprise a maximum permitted purchase price, and

wherein one or more of the service devices are assigned to service personnel in the data processing system, and wherein only the service devices assigned to said service personnel are offered by the data processing system in the form of a catalog for requests.

67. (currently amended) The system of claim 66₁ wherein the data processing system is further programmed to providing for purchasing of the requested service device by the requesting service provider if there is no availability in the inventory pool.

68. (currently amended) The system of claim 66₁ wherein each of the device data records contains data uniquely characterizing the respective service device in terms of device type, location, user, owner data, leasing costs data, and purchase price data.

69. (currently amended) The system of claim 66₁ wherein each of the device data records further include a date for a recall of the service device wherein the data

processing system automatically compares a current date with the date for a recall of the service device, and wherein if the current date is after the recall date, a recall of the service device to the device service provider is initiated.

70. (currently amended) The system of claim 69₁ wherein the date for the recall of the service device is a date for a calibration of the service device.

71. (currently amended) The system of claim 66₁ wherein when a device request is made the data processing system checks the validity of the device request based on personnel-related admissibility criteria, and wherein, if the device request is not valid, the data processing system requests a person with release authorization to initiate a release of the device request.

72. (currently amended) The system of claim 71₁ wherein the personnel-related admissibility criteria comprise a maximum permitted purchase price.

Allowable Subject Matter

3. Claims 45, 48, 51-52, 55-59, and 66-72 are allowed.

Reasons for allowance

4. As per independent claims 45 and 66 the following is an examiner's statement of reasons for allowance: The prior art of record most closely resembling Applicant's

claimed invention are Glovitz et al., (US Patent No. 5,682,421), Sisley et al., (US Patent No. 5,467,268), and Smith et al., (US Patent No. 6,879,962).

Glovitz discloses methods and apparatus for implementing an automated dispatch service system and, more particularly, to a system which permits field technicians to interface with a central computer via conventional telephone systems. Glovitz further discloses that when a service request is completed, the actual time spent by the technician and the parts inventory used to repair the equipment are stored and later used to compute a customer invoice. Data collected for inventory usage and service of specific copiers may be used to evaluate equipment reliability and profitability. The data may also be used to evaluate a technician's performance. This system may be integrated with a wide range of other systems to manage accounting and inventory.

Sisley discloses A system and method for assigning and scheduling resource requests to resource providers use a modified "best-first" search technique that combines optimization, artificial intelligence, and constraint-processing to arrive at near-optimal assignment and scheduling solutions. In response to changes in a dynamic resource environment, potential changes to an existing assignment set are evaluated in a search for a better solution. New calls are assigned and scheduled as they are received, and the assignment set is readjusted as the field service environment changes, resulting in global optimization. Each search operation is in response to either an incremental change to the assignment set such as adding a new resource request, removing a pending resource request, reassigning a pending resource request, or to a request for further evaluation. Thus, the search technique assumes that the existing

assignment set is already optimized, and limits the task only to evaluating the effects of the incremental change. In addition, each search operation produces a complete assignment and scheduling solution. Consequently, the search can be terminated to accept the best solution generated so far, making the technique an "anytime" search.

Smith discloses a logistics method that provides logistics computer programming for controlling a plurality of transports to supply a plurality of delivery locations from one or more bases. Each of the bases and delivery locations are in communication with a central database, preferably an Internet server database, that contains updated logistics information. The central database is preferably automatically updated at selectable intervals as to transport location, destination, fuel level, speed, and heading. Manifests may be originated at the respective delivery location or at an associated base and are stored in the central database. Each material on the manifest is associated with information such as the authorized vendor, a description, storage preferences, units, hazardous designations and additional information if the material is hazardous. Given information about each transport such as load capacity, fuel level, location intelligence, and the like that is stored in the central database and information about the materials, manifest status, and other factors, potential least cost delivery routes using capable transports can be automatically produced for selection by an operator. The logistics computer programming automatically designates where each manifested material is stored on the transport. The computer programming associates a status designation with each manifest such as outstanding, staged, printed, loaded, unloaded, and cancelled. Each manifest is also associated with a priority which may range from

emergency to routine. Updated logistics information concerning materials, manifests, vendors, transports, delivery locations, and operating companies is available from the central database.

However, the combination of Glovitz, Sisley, and Smith fails to teach or suggest the limitations of independent claims 45 and 66 which recite wherein the data processing system is programmed to (a) receive a request from a client computer of a requesting service provider for a requested service device; (b) check the availability of the requested service device, via the computer on the data processing system, by searching the inventory pool in the database by: (i) searching an inventory of the requesting service provider in the inventory pool and providing for loaning of the requested service device if located; otherwise, (ii) searching the device provider inventory and providing for leasing the requested service device if located; otherwise, (iii) searching the service provider inventories of other service providers in the inventory pool and leasing the requested service device if located; wherein the service providers have a defined set of service personnel who can request service devices, and wherein in the data processing system is stored for each of the service personnel a respective personnel data record containing data uniquely characterizing the service personnel in terms of name and associated service provider, wherein the personnel data record comprises one or more of criteria for the validity of a device request and a person with release authorization for the release of an invalid device request, wherein, when a device request is made by service personnel the data processing system checks the

validity of the device request regarding the personnel-related admissibility criteria, and wherein, if the device request is not valid, the data processing system requests a person with release authorization associated with the service personnel to initiate a release of the device request, wherein the personnel-related admissibility criteria comprise a maximum permitted purchase price, and wherein one or more of the service devices are assigned to service personnel in the data processing system, and wherein only the service devices assigned to said service personnel are offered by the data processing system in the form of a catalog for requests.

As per claims 48, 51-52, 55-59, and 67-72, these claims depend on the allowed independent claims 45 and 66 above and incorporate the limitations thereof, and are therefore allowed for at least the same rationale as applied to the independent claim 1 above, and incorporated herein.

Any comments considered necessary by applicant must be submitted no later than the payment of the issue fee and, to avoid processing delays, should preferably accompany the issue fee. Such submissions should be clearly labeled "Comments on Statement of Reasons for Allowance."

Conclusion

5. The prior art made of record on the PTO-892 and not relied upon is considered pertinent to applicant's disclosure.

6. Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Gurkanwaljit Singh whose telephone number is (571)270-5392. The examiner can normally be reached on Monday to Thursday 8am-5pm EST.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Kambiz Abdi can be reached on (571)272-6702. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free). If you would like assistance from a USPTO Customer Service Representative or access to the automated information system, call 800-786-9199 (IN USA OR CANADA) or 571-272-1000.

/G. S./
Examiner, Art Unit 3624
June 10, 2010

/Romain Jeanty/
Primary Examiner, Art Unit 3624